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AUTHOR	Barron, Hal S.
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ABSTRACT

Between 1870 and 1930, a "second great transformation" in the Northeast and Midwest was characterized by centralization of the economy, expansion of state power and professional expertise, and a rising urban consumer culture. Communities in the rural North faced a number of challenges: diminishing local control over schools and roads, the effects of large corporations on family farmers and local businesses, and the threat of consumer capitalism to rural life and beliefs. This book examines the complexities of the rural experience from 1870 to 1930, an experience that encompassed both change and continuity and both accommodation and resistance. Chapters discuss: (1) rural road reform and the politics of localism; (2) localism and rural opposition to educational reform; (3) the ironies of dairy organization in the New York milkshed; (4) the social and ideological bases of farmers' grain elevators; (5) mail-order buying in the rural North; and (6) the rural North and consumer culture in the 1920s. The chapter on educational reform describes country schools as contested terrain during this period, serving as flash points for a wide range of concerns such as the changing nature of rural communities and the conflict between two competing visions of society. Rural opposition to school consolidation became a measure of the countryside's distance from the second great transformation of American society. (Contains references in extensive notes, illustrations, and an index.) (SV)

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